

The grand committee, consisting of [blank] to whom were, among other things, referred a motion of Mr. Monroe, respecting the cessions and division of western lands and territory, report ...

The grand Committee, consisting of to whom were, among other Things, referred a motion of Mr. Monroe, respecting the **CESSIONS** and **DIVISION** of **WESTERN LANDS** and **TERRITORY**.—

REPORT.—

THAT they have considered the said motion, and examined the acts of Congress, and of the states, relative to the cessions of western lands and territory within the United States, to forming the same into states, and the future government thereof; and find that the state of New-York ceded their claims to those western lands beyond certain limits generally, and without any condition as to the extent of the states that maybe there formed; and that Congress, October 10, 1780. having (among other things) resolved, that the unappropriated lands that may be ceded to the United States by any particular state, pursuant to the recommendation of Congress of September 6, 1780, shall be formed into distinct republican states; that each state which shall be so formed, shall contain a suitable extent of territory, not less than one hundred, nor more than one hundred and fifty miles square, or as near thereto as circumstances will admit. The states of Massachusetts and Virginia, in pursuance of said resolve, have made cessions of their respective claims to said lands and territory, beyond certain limits, on condition that the same be formed into states of the extent aforesaid, which cessions have been accepted by Congress; by reason of which conditions, it is become obligatory on the federal government in dividing the said lands into states, to form them of the same extent; unless those conditions

Library of Congress

shall be altered by consent of the said states; but such a division of the western country cannot, in the opinion of the committee, be in any degree practicable, conformable to the natural boundaries of it, or for the interest of the confederacy; according to this plan, some states must be so situated as to have no advantages of navigation; some inconveniently divided by rivers, lakes and mountains; and many of them must probably contain a large proportion of barren and unimprovable lands.

It is, in the opinion of the committee, highly expedient that settlements in that country should be formed into governments as soon as possible, and admitted into the confederacy; that order and the true principles of government may be established among them, and they become an accession of strength to the union. But if that country be divided into states, agreeable to the system at present adopted, the probability is, that many of them will not soon, if ever, have a sufficient number of inhabitants to form a government; the consequence of which must be, that they will continue without laws, and without order among them, and the union without receiving any advantages or aid from them. The tract of country north-west of the river Ohio, having many natural boundaries, and the barren and fertile lands intermixed in no regular form, it will be found in the division of it, indispensably necessary to pay particular attention to those boundaries, and to the circumstances of the settlements, men will form natural local advantages, be induced to make; and such a variety of circumstances must come into view in fixing the dimensions of states there, on a more perfect knowledge of a country, as yet, in some degree unexplored; that is, in the opinion of the committee, highly inexpedient, by any compact or condition, so far to limit the United States in Congress assembled in forming states there, as to preclude the consideration of the future interest of the confederacy, the future condition of that country, and the circumstances of settlers in it; and though the mode of dividing that country into states heretofore adopted, may be as perfect as our knowledge of it would then suggest, yet a further investigation of the subject must fully evince that it is in some degree defective, and incapable of being carried into effect.

Library of Congress

Therefore they submit the following resolve:

RESOLVED, That it be recommended to the legislatures of the states of Massachusetts and Virginia, to take into consideration their said acts of cession, and revise the same so far as to empower the United States in Congress assembled, to make such division, into states of said ceded lands and territory, as the situation of the country and future circumstances may require, with this limitation and condition, however, that all the territory of the United States, lying north-west of the river Ohio, shall be formed into a number of states not less than two, nor more than five, to be admitted into the confederacy on the principles and in the forms heretofore established and provided.

Monroe's Motion Western Territory passed